

Asian Americans in Missions

A glance around the crowd of most missions conferences shows Asian American Christians are interested in world missions. Yet there are relatively few Asian American missionaries. Why is that? We are the same as our non-Asian friends in many ways. But if we are to effectively join in Christ's Great Commission work, we need to recognize how we are different.

Collective

We are taught that our actions extend beyond ourselves. As we explore missions, we may experience collective thinking in:

Community

Close Connections

Closer ties to other Asian Americans provide community, ethnic identity and acceptance. But our collectivist mindset also discourages individualism. Being a missionary may seem very personal and self-centered.

The need to raise financial support

Asian Americans were 2.5 times more likely than other groups to report that raising financial support for ministry embarrassed their families. Asking directly for money runs counter to our more indirect and relationship-oriented Asian

NORM. (Perry, Samuel L. "Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage" *Review of Religious Research*, 53 no 4 Jan 2012.)

Family

High Parental Expectations

Asian American children are often expected to provide for their parents in old age through well-paying careers. A child's success validates the sacrifices their parents have made. Though many parents are Christians, the low pay and prestige associated with missions is not valued.

Importance of Education

The Asian American community puts a higher value on education than any other group. We seek greater opportunities for our children that a better education can afford. (US Census 2015)

Desire for Financial Security

The motivation to be successful and the security it brings is not unique to AAs. But robust finances allow us to be generous to our parents and make them proud – a long thank you for the sacrifices they have made.

Using our Asian-ness for God's Kingdom

A call into missions isn't just an individual decision but an extension of the local church (eg Acts 13:1-3). As we recognize and intentionally develop gifts in pastors or music leaders, we can also set apart those whom God may be calling into long-term missions. This makes the call collective rather than individual, placing both the authority and responsibility to support the family on the local church.

We are to honor our parents and our Lord. Leaving home to serve God in another country is not abandoning your family. Internet or phone communication is increasingly available everywhere in the world. Schedule regular times to connect. Some missionaries have grown closer with their parents despite the physical distance. Some agencies allow more frequent home visits and parental allowance to be included within their missionary budgets.

Steps

for the Church

- ◆ Begin praying as a church for the Lord to raise up potential missionaries from your congregation.
- ◆ Have the church advocate for the family, reducing the shame of asking people directly for money.
- ◆ Help your congregation understand giving to missions is an ongoing ministry expense, not a one-time need.
- ◆ Work together as a church to support the missionary's family that remains - a surrogate family in their absence.

for you

- ◆ Find a missions mentor who can help you in your journey.
- ◆ Address parental concerns about financial security and their grandchildren's safety, education and opportunities.
- ◆ Introduce your parents to your church family whether they are Christians or not. Organize a group to adopt them, providing for their needs while your family is on the field.
- ◆ If God has blessed you with children, develop a realistic plan early recognizing their educational needs and opportunities. This may play a significant role in the location and shape of your ministry.

Your Asian roots are a precious gift that God has given you. Embrace them. It is for your blessing and His eternal purposes. God is faithful. He will make a way as you trust Him.